By Joe Crews

Introduction

It seems very appropriate that the word DYNAMITE is a transliteration of the Greek word DUNAMIS, which means power. The word is not a stranger to those who are students of the Scriptures. It is one of the colorful adjectives used in the Bible to describe the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power (DUNAMIS) of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16.

How few Christians have a true understanding of the explosive power of the gospel they so lightly profess! If Paul's words are true, then everyone who possesses the gospel should also be filled with tremendous power. But is that the case? Unfortunately, the lives of countless church members are flaccid, bland, and miserably compromised. Instead of vibrant power there seems to be discouragement and defeat. What is wrong? Do these people really believe the gospel or not? And why is the dynamite so obviously missing in their lives?

The answer must be that many do not truly believe what they profess. Or else, they have been taught a counterfeit gospel. Some of the greatest spiritual problems of today are rooted in a misunderstanding of the gospel. The sad fact is that millions have no true comprehension of what is afforded through the gospel, and what it is supposed to do for them. Unaware of its full provisions, they stumble along, claiming only what their weak faith is able to encompass. Instead of feasting at the banquet table of the Lord, these people gather crumbs from under the table which barely provides enough strength to survive.

They are very much like the "missing heirs" we have heard so much about. All across America millions of dollars are stacked up in banks waiting for the true owners to take possession of the money. In most cases, the heirs are unaware of the wealth which rightfully belongs to them and which only awaits their demand and reception. But these millions are nothing compared to the spiritual riches which still lie untapped by those Christians who fail to recognize their own unlimited affluence. For no reason, except their own abysmal failure to claim their true possessions, most professed Christians are living in wretched poverty and weakness.

Satan Has No Power Over God's Children

Do you know why these millionaires are living like paupers? Because they have allowed the devil to intimidate them. He has lied to them about one of their most basic privileges. We need to unmask the evil one and expose the false claims he makes concerning his authority. Satan would like for us to believe that he has unlimited control over this world and all its people. That is not true. He is not the master of God's children and has no power at all over the saints. Where Christ lives and reigns, Satan trembles and flees for his life. GOD IS STRONGER THAN SATAN. This glorious truth must fill our minds with constant assurance.

Don't misunderstand me. Satan is powerful. We have all seen the incredible, enslaving influence that he exercises in the life of a sinner. But when Christ banishes the devil from that sinner and controls his life, the power for good is far greater than the evil. If there is more power in Christ than there is in Satan, then there is more power in grace than there is in sin. Jesus is not just as strong as the devil, else the warfare between them might end in a draw or a standoff. But, thank God, Christ has already won the battle and Satan is a defeated foe right now.

This leads us to the joyful conclusion that the Christian has somebody stronger helping him to follow Jesus than the sinner has helping him to follow Satan. This glorious fact should give tremendous comfort to every child of God. It also raises a very interesting question. If we have such a powerful defender on our side, who desires our salvation, is it correct to also conclude that it's easier to be saved than to be lost? Before any glib response is made to that question, we need to consider the two major aspects of salvation. It is very important to understand whether the question relates to BECOMING a Christian or REMAINING a Christian.

We would like to believe that because Christ is stronger than Satan, He would facilitate the entire process of salvation for His children. Yet, we have experienced first hand the painful struggle with self in making the decision to follow Jesus. There was a titanic battle between the flesh and the Spirit, and Satan exploited every human frailty in seeking to hold us in the bondage of sin. It is doubtful that even one soul would concede that it is easier to surrender fully to Christ than to continue living after the flesh. Satan seems to have hundreds of enticing allurements to make it difficult to break away from the ways of the world.

Furthermore, the devil has one advantage over God in that he can lie, and make things appear exactly opposite of what they really are. He can make sin appear unobjectionable and beautiful. The fallen nature of man, with it's powerful propensity to sin, has a natural bent toward things which are evil. And even after conversion, that lower nature can be appealed to by the delusions and deceptions of Satan. This means that the Christian must be

constantly on the alert for subtle or oblique attacks from a very clever enemy.

The Way of the Transgressor is Hard; Not the Way of the Obedient

Does this mean that it will be discouraging to follow the Christian lifestyle? Will the harrassments of temptation make it miserable to live for Christ? On the contrary we can rest in the settled assurance that we are on the winning side of the great controversy. He that is for us is greater than he that is against us. Isn't that exciting good news? The conversion experience transforms the mind and will into a veritable spiritual fortress. From that control center the Holy Spirit exercises a subduing influence over the lower fleshly nature. As long as the faculties are yielded to God the Christian finds relief from the burden and guilt of sin.

Is this not what the Master meant when He spoke these words: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. ... and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."? Matthew 11:28-30. Certainly Jesus was not saying that hardships and conflicts would disappear from the lives of His followers. Rather He was describing the joy and peace of mind that would mark the path of the obedient. When Jesus met Saul on the road to Damascus He said, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." The meaning of these words is obvious. He was telling Saul that it was hard to resist the Holy Spirit. The misery and struggle lay in the path of disobedience. The way of the transgressor is hard; not the way of the obedient.

We must stop allowing Satan to brainwash us with the exaggerated claims of his authority. It is true that under the reign of sin it is easier to do wrong than it is to do right, but it is also true that under the reign of grace it is easier to do right than it is to do wrong. Why should we not assert the prerogatives that belong to us as the children of God? The Bible writers did not hesitate to challenge the limited authority of Satan, and neither should we. Paul wrote: "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 5:20, 21.

Note the expression, "as sin hath reigned." How did sin reign? As a controlling power, did it not? Driving back every spiritual impulse, the carnal nature overpowered all the efforts of grace to enter the heart. But notice that grace abounds "much more" than sin, and "as sin hath

reigned...even so might grace reign"! Obviously, grace will also be a controlling power which can overpower all the efforts of sin to enter the life. Isn't that a fantastic assurance? The devil has no dynamite that compares with the shattering dynamite of the gospel in a surrendered life.

So we are brought back to the question again: Is it harder to serve Jesus or Satan? It is undeniable that we have access to more good power than bad. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Someone might answer, "Satan." And I say, "So what? He flees at the very name of Jesus." Of course, he wants you to be lost, but God wants you to be saved. You can win every time by being on the side of the stronger. Jesus referred to His mastery of devils in these words: "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him,...he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." Luke 11:21, 22.

The strong man referred to is Satan, of course. He is stronger than the wisest man who ever lived (Solomon), and the strongest man who ever lived (Samson), and the most perfect man who ever lived (Adam). But he is not stronger than Jesus. Christ is that stronger One who "overcame him" and delivers the captives out of his hands. What an exciting reality!

All Will Be Saved Who do Not Resist

Not only does God have the power to save us, but He has the desire to do it. It is His will that all should come to repentance and be saved. What produces repentance in the life? Paul assures us that "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." Romans 2:4. How many does He lead toward repentance? Everyone, of course, since it is His will to save all. Christ said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12:32. His love does not appeal to a select few only, but to ALL men. His goodness LEADS every soul to repent, and His love DRAWS all men to the cross. If this is true, why are not all men saved? Because they resist the sweet drawing influence of the Holy Spirit. There is absolutely no doubt that God actively seeks the salvation of every soul on planet earth, and He will continue to convict those who have not hardened themselves in unbelief.

What a thought! The difficult thing to do is to fight against salvation. Unless we resist, God will persist in drawing us to Himself. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11. To how many men? ALL men! Hebrews 2:9 says that Jesus tasted death "for every man." Again, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. The only reason all the world is not saved is simply because the great majority resists God's provision of saving, sanctifying

grace.

So the really hard thing about the way of transgression is the binding hold that sin has fastened on the mind and body. This is why it is easier for the unconverted to continue their course than to turn from death to life. There is nothing within them capable of challenging the will of the flesh. But we affirm just as confidently that the born-again Christian will quickly grow to abhor sin, and will find it an absolutely miserable act to compromise the conscience by willful disobedience.

So what is the answer to the question, Is it easier to be saved or to be lost? We must truthfully say that it is difficult to make the initial turn from the self-life, but after the heart is surrendered, the path of the Christian, in every way, is happier and easier to maintain. Let's consider the theology behind this glorious fact.

The Bible speaks of "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:24-26.

Please notice that only those who "believe in Jesus" will be personally justified, even though the cross provides it for everyone. The text says there must be "faith in his blood." The utility company provides abundant power and light to my home, but I receive no benefit whatever unless I push the switches in my home. All of God's saving, cleansing, justifying power is of no benefit to me in salvation unless I accept it in a personal way.

Our text also speaks of "remission of sins that are past" as a part of this justification experience. What really happens in this act of remission or forgiveness of sins? Many believe that this is something which happens outside the life of the believer. They consider that forgiveness changes God's attitude toward the transgressor because of some celestial accounting carried out billions of light years away. Is it true that forgiveness affects God so that He no longer holds something against me? This is decidedly not the case. Forgiveness does not change God toward us; it changes us toward Him. God didn't need to change. He was never wrong. Man was the sinner who needed to change. He stood condemned before a broken law that could offer no grace or forgiveness. There was absolutely no righteousness to be drawn from the law. It could not provide any strength for right-doing. The sinner was powerless, condemned and helpless under the scourging of that law.

Paul's terminology makes condemnation to be the opposite of justification.

In Romans 8:1-4 he describes what justification subjectively accomplishes for the individual. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Immediately, we can see that the problem lay in the flesh which was too weak to obey the law. Something had to be done in man to bring him back into harmony with God. The Greek word for RIGHTEOUSNESS in this verse is DIKAIMA, which means JUST REQUIREMENT. How could the weak-flesh problem be remedied so that man could fulfill the requirements of the law?

God provided the full solution when He sent Jesus in the flesh to obey the law perfectly. It was only because Christ lived a perfect life of obedience that He is able to impute justification to each one of us. If that plan of sending Jesus had not taken care of my weakness in the flesh, then the plan would have failed. When Christ moves into the life, the condemnation is removed, the sins are forgiven, and we are empowered to fulfill the requirements of the law through Christ in us. This is the change which forgiveness makes in the life.

Forgiveness does not change God, but us. He justifies the ungodly by taking away the ungodliness. He justifies the rebellious sinner by taking away the rebellion. When He declares us righteous, His self-filling word makes us righteous. He does not declare something which is not true. The One who conquered Satan now moves into the human heart to provide victory over the power of sin. The miracle of the new life is described in the Bible by utterly fantastic expressions. We can have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), partake of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19), and be made free from sin (Romans 6:18). All this is possible as grace begins to rule the life, and under this power, Satan doesn't have a ghost of a chance.

Christians Need Not Cringe or Cower

All who do not resist the goodness of God will be led to repentance and salvation, and they should not be intimidated by the pretended authority of a defeated foe. We must recognize our position as the sons of God. We should also be unafraid to acknowledge our authority in Christ over Satan. It is time for God's children to stop trembling before the threats of a conquered enemy. Too often in evangelism we watch in dismay as the devil arranges his competing attractions to take people away from the Word of God. We say, "Oh my, what are we going to do? The circus is coming to town during our crusade." The truth is that Satan should be worried instead

of us. He ought to tremble and say, "What am I going to do? The evangelistic meetings are coming to town."

God's Spirit-filled children must learn to be more confident, more aggressive and bold in their assertion of truth in the name of the mighty, conquering Creator God. We are not operating in the strength of the flesh but in the power of the Holy Spirit. He that is for us is greater than he which is against us. Praise be to God for such assurance!

Now let us consider the question, WHY IS IT NOT HARD TO SERVE CHRIST WHEN YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN? Please don't mistake the language of this question. We are talking about a born-again Christian following Jesus. There is no contention that anyone else will find it easy to live the Christian life. In fact, there is probably no more difficult task in the world than trying to live for Christ in the strength of the flesh. It is quite possible that many of the degenerative diseases and weaknesses of the body have been produced by generations of struggle to please God by human effort. People are wearied and worn out by such futile activity.

I am not saying that there will be no effort or struggle, but for the committed Christian the way of obedience is a joy and delight AND VICTORY IS ASSURED! "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3. The great disciple of love declares that it is not hard to obey God's law when it is the fruitage of a love relationship. The Psalmist wrote, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8. There are two strong reasons why it is not grievous for the true Christian to serve the Lord. First, he is absolutely confident that God loves him and will do only what is good for him. Second, he loves Christ supremely and chooses to run no risk of displeasing Him.

Restrictions Can be a Delight

Someone may raise a question about the demands laid down in the Bible and the penalties attached for transgression. None can deny that they are there. Do these requirements and threatened penalties make obedience a hardship? Let me answer that question with two imaginary interviews. Suppose I have just submitted to a complete medical examination and the doctor is giving me a report of his findings. He says, "Joe, I have bad, bad news for you. Your tests indicate that you are going to die unless you follow my orders exactly. To save your life, you must obey what I'm going to tell you, and you must continue to follow my orders every day for the rest of your life. I've found that you will be required to eat two or three times a day in order to save your life. And you must force yourself to do it day after day

as long as you live."

Think about it for a moment. Those are strict rules with heavy penalties attached. I can lose my life by violating the law laid down by the doctor. But will it be difficult for me to follow those orders? Of course not! Why? Simply because there is a higher law leading me to eat every day anyway. The physical laws of my being demand that I eat regularly, and I enjoy doing it. It is for my own good to eat, and I do not have to force myself to comply with the doctor's rigid requirements.

In the same way there is a law of love operating in every Christian life which is the natural extension of a personal relation with Jesus. The commandments and penalties of the Bible are no threat whatsoever, because the Christian recognizes the higher law leading him to do these same things that are for his best good. He does not obey for fear of the penalty, but because he is happiest obeying the One he loves.

Let's imagine another conversation that will never actually take place. I am preparing to leave home for a month of evangelism. My wife tells me goodbye and then solemnly holds a paper before my face. "Joe," she says, "you will be gone for a month, and your check will be mailed out before you return. I just want you to read this paper very carefully. It is a copy of Maryland Statute No. 392, and it states that you will be put in jail if you don't send me money to operate the home. It's not very pleasant in that county jail, so I'll be expecting you to send that money as soon as you get your check."

What she says is true, but do I need the threat of that law to make me support my family? No, there is a higher law of love which makes me want to take care of my loved ones. Love turns duty into a joyful privilege. I remember walking ten miles in the pouring rain to keep a date with the girl I loved. I had no regrets. My love for her overruled the hardship. We can make anything a burden by the attitude we have toward it and by the way we relate to it. It is a burden to serve Jesus only if the relationship is wrong.

Is the Narrow Road Hard and Unhappy?

I have heard people say, "But Christianity is so restrictive." True. But marriage is even more restrictive than religion. Does that make it miserable? Do brides and grooms complain about the narrow promises they make to each other? I have performed many marriages and have never seen newlyweds unhappy about their commitments. They are always radiant, even though they have just promised their lives away.

Imagine someone approaching the new bride with these discouraging words: "Oh, my! You really are in a bad situation now. Just think, you've got to cook for this guy every day of your life. You'll be required to clean the house, mend his clothes, and put up with his untidy habits. This marriage thing is bad news." Do you know how that new young wife would respond? She would say, "Wonderful! I love it!"

Suppose someone should try to discourage a newly baptized Christian, who has just been "married" to Jesus, with these words: "Oh, you've got yourself into a miserable mess. Just think, you can't go to the bars and dances anymore. You can't go to the ball games on Sabbath, and you won't be able to eat pork and shrimp anymore." Without question that beaming newborn Christian would answer, "Wonderful! I love every moment of it!"

The explanation for this response is made in 2 Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." Love propels and compels people to do anything and everything to please the One who died for them. No burdensome yoke binds such disciples to the path of service and obedience. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14. That word blessed really means happy. The commandments may be restrictive, but it is a joy to be restricted by love.

To the unconverted these thoughts are alien and contradictory. People who are not in love cannot appreciate the selfless involvement of those who are happily married. Some married couples have destroyed their love for each other, and they look upon marriage as a galling bondage. The fault is not with the marriage, but with the attitude. When Christians fall away and lose their relationship with Jesus, they also begin to complain about the burden of religion. The fault lies not in the religion but in the loveless hearts of the complainers.

Does all of this stand in opposition to the teaching of Christ concerning self-denial? Jesus did say, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Luke 9:23. Did He mean that the way of obedience would be hard and unhappy? No. He was simply picturing the reality of competing attractions in the life of a Christian. There will always be allurements of the flesh and of the world appealing to self and trying to draw me away from Christ. Without the compelling influence of a higher affection, the emotional appeal of those things might be overpowering. Here is where the lines of love's authority are revealed. The powerful love of Christ constrains me to cling to Him and say "No" to the incessant invitation of the flesh, the devil, and the world. Those foolish challenges to my relationship with Christ will always be present, but I will always be able to choose to stay with Him for two reasons: I love Him more than anything or anybody else in the world, and I know He will do only what

is best for me.

Satan will utilize feeling as one of his most effective weapons against the saints, but a true Christian will recognize that the flesh and feelings cannot be trusted. We must serve God because of right and truth and not because we feel in the mood. Moods have led millions to deny the Lord and live for the flesh. Most of those who serve the devil today are doing so because they have been deceived and blinded by feeling. It is a constant marvel to watch people follow the shallow artificialities of sin in pursuit of happiness. Obviously, they do not derive any true pleasure out of smoking, drinking, and otherwise destroying themselves by indulgent behavior; yet, robot-like, they go through the motions dictated by their carnal desires.

Walter Winchell summed it up when he wrote in his newspaper column: "The saddest people in the world are those sitting in joints making believe they are having a good time. This Broadway Street is full of amusement places trying to make people happy, yet its people are drenched in unhappiness."

The problem is that those millions have no power of a higher law of spiritual love operating in their lives. With no competing force to oppose it, the flesh holds a controlling influence over the mind and body. Self responds to the emotional appeal of external stimuli and has no choice but to be captured by the flesh. It reminds me of a story I heard about a concentration camp. A man stood looking through the barbed wires of an overcrowded death camp. Inside, the prisoners stood with emaciated bodies, hollow cheeks, and sunken eyes. As the man on the outside gazed at the spectacle of those starving inmates, one of the prisoners called to him and said, "Ha! You can't come in here, can you?" Immediately, the self-nature reacted to the challenge. "Who says I can't? I'll show you." And the man crawled through the wire to join the other sad-faced internees.

That is probably as close as we can come to explaining the senseless carnival of death that leads millions every year into presumptuous violation of the laws of their being. Incredible as it may seem, self is willing to make itself miserable in order to have its own way, and those in the flesh have no power to resist its dictates. It is much easier for them to do wrong than it is to do right. But let us repeat and reaffirm the glorious truth that for those who are deeply in love with Christ, it is easier to do right than it is to do wrong.

Here is the good news of the full gospel of Jesus Christ, and I hold it out to every reader of these words right now. Jesus came to provide the dynamite power by which we can be both justified and sanctified. We may have deliverance from the guilt of sin and also from the power of sin. By accepting the simple, free provisions of the gospel, salvation is assured in

all three tenses of our Christian experience - past, present, and future. May God help us not to be satisfied with a partial understanding or application of His grace. Let us lay hold of the incredible riches and power (DUNAMIS) which have been given to us as the sons and daughters of God.

How to Claim Victory Over Sin

Have you heard about the evolutionary way of getting the victory over bad habits and sins? It is sometimes called the TAPERING method or the TRYING method, but generally, it just doesn't work. Oh, it partially works, of course, because old age takes care of some temptations and sins, and time settles the rest when death comes. But do you know why TRYING does not work in overcoming the devil?

Why can't we fight the devil for a few months and finally drive him away? Because the devil is stronger than we are. We could fight him for a year, but he would still be stronger than we are at the end of that year. Trying will never break the power of sin in a single instance because we are facing an enemy who will always be stronger than we are. What, then, is the answer to our weakness and defeat? This question leads us to the sweetest and most sublime secret in the Word of God.

First of all, one must understand that all of Heaven's gifts are available to us through the promises of the Bible, and we receive them by faith. Peter describes the "exceeding great and precious promises" and assures us that "by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." 2 Peter 1:4. Mighty power is stored within the promise to fulfill itself to all who claim it in faith. So few are willing to believe that the promised blessing becomes theirs the very moment they believe it. Why is it so hard to believe implicitly that God will do what He promises?

Now, let us come down to the very heart of victory and consider the four simple scriptural steps that any believer may take in claiming God's power. Four texts will illuminate the amazing transaction. FIRST: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57. Allow your mind to savor the fantastic message of these words. VICTORY IS A GIFT! We do not earn it by our efforts or deserve it because of any supposed goodness. The only thing we need do is ask for it, and the victory will be given to us freely by Christ. He is the only One who has ever gained the victory over Satan, and if we ever possess the victory, it will have to come as a gift from Him.

Let me ask you something. Do you need victory in your life over some binding, miserable habit of sin? Some are slaves to appetite, to alcohol, or tobacco. Others are struggling helplessly against impurity, anger, or worldliness. The Bible says you may have the victory as a gift through Jesus Christ. Do you believe He will give you that power if you ask Him? How certain can you be that God will answer your prayer for victory immediately? Here is how sure you can be - just as sure as Christ's words are true!

Our SECOND text is Matthew 7:11, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" Is it a good thing when you ask for victory over tobacco or any other fleshly or moral evil? Of course it is! And you don't even have to ask if it is God's will! He has already told us in the Bible that it is His will to destroy the works of sin and the devil. If we pray for more money or a better job, we should always ask according to His will, but the victory over sin is promised to everyone who asks in faith.

Will God give the victory when we ask Him? Jesus said He is more willing to give this good thing than we are to feed our children when they are hungry. He is waiting to honor your faith and to "supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19. These assurances are so open-ended and unlimited that our minds are staggered by it. Why have we been so reluctant to apply for the provisions of grace? Why is it so hard to believe that God means exactly what He says?

Here is the next question. How do we know we have the victory after we ask Him? Simply because He said we would have it. We know God does not lie. We can believe His promise. The very moment we ask, we should accept the fact of fulfillment, thank Him for the gift, get up and act as if it has been done. No kind of proof-feeling or sign should be demanded or expected. The self-fulfilling power in the promise is released in response to our faith alone.

This brings us to the THIRD text found in Romans 6:11, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The word RECKON means to believe, or to consider it done. Every practice of faith should be focused on that one request for victory, and then, it should be accounted as done. Do you remember how Peter walked on the water? He asked Jesus if he could step out of the boat onto the raging sea, and Jesus told Peter to come. But how long did Peter do the impossible by walking on the water? The Bible says, "When he saw the

wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." Matthew 14:30.

What was Peter afraid of? He was afraid of sinking and drowning. In spite of Christ's assurance that he could safely walk on the water, Peter began to doubt the word of the Master. That is when he began to sink. As long as he believed the promise of Jesus and acted in faith, he was safe. When he doubted, he sank.

Now, what is the impossible thing as far as you are concerned? It is not walking on water. It is overcoming that tobacco habit or other besetting sin. And Christ says, "Come to me. I will give you victory." As long as you believe that you have been delivered, you will have the victory. It is as simple as that. The very moment you ask for victory it will be placed in your life as a reservoir of power. You won't feel it, but it is there. It will remain there as long as you accept it in faith.

For some people the deliverance is so dramatic that they lose even the appetite for the sin. Tobacco addicts have sometimes been delivered from the craving. BUT THIS IS NOT THE USUAL WAY GOD DOES IT. Usually, the desire remains, but in the moment of temptation, the power to walk past the temptation springs forth from within. Faith accepts the fact of deliverance and constantly claims the victory which is in the secure possession of the believer.

The final step to victory is described in our FOURTH text, Romans 13:14, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." So strong is the confidence in the appropriated power of God that no consideration is given to falling under the power of that sin again. Under the old TRYING plan, provision was made to fail in most cases. Cigarettes were placed on a shelf, and the smoker said to himself, "I'm going to try never to smoke again, but if I don't make it, I know where they are." But under the TRUSTING plan, we have no reason to fear failure on the grounds of human weakness. Victory does not depend on our strength but on God's power. We might fail, but He cannot fail. Cigarettes are thrown away. All plans that might involve any degree of compromise are abandoned.

Little Jimmy was in trouble because he had gone swimming against his mother's orders. When asked why he had disobeyed her, Jimmy answered, "Because I got tempted." Mother then said, "I noticed that you took your bathing suit with you this morning. Why did you do that?" Jimmy answered,

"Because I expected to get tempted." How typical of those who do not quite trust their own strength to win the victory. They make provision to fail.

Someone might raise the objection that this could be discouraging. Suppose the person does fail? Even Peter began to sink. Would it not shake confidence in God if the victory was not maintained? No. Peter's sinking had nothing to do with the failure of divine power. It did not change Christ's will for him to walk on the water. It only pointed up Peter's need of stronger faith to enable him to obey Christ's command. Our faith could weaken. We might need to be reminded of our total dependence upon His strength. But this does not diminish from the beautiful plan of God to impart power and victory through "the exceeding great and precious promises" of the Bible. Without faith by the receiver, not even God's promises can be appropriated. The limits are clearly defined in the words of Jesus, "According to your faith be it unto you." Matthew 9:29.

There it is, friend, in all of its simplicity. AND IT WORKS! If you are willing to be delivered, it works. Nothing will help the one who is not willing to give up the sin. But if you want it, it is there. VICTORY, POWER, DELIVERANCE - just reach out in faith and it is yours. Believe it and claim it this very moment. God wants you to be free.